

Processed Fruit and Vegetables

General information

Fresh fruit and vegetables are a good source of vitamins, minerals and dietary fibre. Whilst most fruit and vegetables should be eaten fresh, processed fruit and vegetables can be acceptable alternatives. They come in many forms, including:

- pre-prepared fresh
- canned
- frozen
- dried
- juiced

Pre-prepared fresh fruit and vegetables

Common varieties include fruit salads and vegetable-based salads. These are convenient, but may have a shorter storage life. They may also be more expensive than whole fresh fruits and vegetables.

It is also important to check the information on the nutrition panel for these foods as some pre-prepared salads may include added ingredients, such as sauces and flavourings, fried bread croutons or meats. Many of these ingredients can be high in saturated fat, sugar or salt and should be avoided.

Frozen or canned fruit and vegetables

THERE IS A WIDE RANGE OF FROZEN AND CANNED FRUITS AND VEGETABLES. FOR EXAMPLE:

- Frozen carrots, peas, beans, corn and vegetable mixes.
- Canned tomatoes, corn, baked beans, beetroot and baby carrots.
- Canned pineapple, peaches, apricots, pears and mixed fruits.
- Frozen mangoes, berries and pineapple.

Frozen and canned fruits and vegetables can be a good choice. Although it is important to remember to select carefully, as some products may have added sugar, fat or salt. Where possible, choose varieties with no added sugar (those canned in natural juice rather than syrups) and those with no added salt or saturated fat.

THE BENEFITS OF CHOOSING FROZEN AND CANNED FRUIT AND VEGETABLES INCLUDE:

- Convenience
- Longer shelf life
- Year round availability
- Most vitamins are retained as they are generally processed and packaged within hours of being picked
- Easy storage
- Easy preparation





Processed Fruit and Vegetables continued

Storing and preparing your processed fruit and vegetables

Whilst the canning and freezing process can help protect food from organisms that can cause food to go off, it is important to store and prepare processed fruit and vegetables properly.

- Frozen fruit and vegetables should be kept at -18 degrees Celsius for no more than six months. When shopping, try to put frozen products in your trolley last, take them home immediately and place them straight in the freezer.
- Canned fruit and vegetables are sterilised by heating during the canning process, and can be kept on the shelf for 2 to 4 years. Once a can is opened, however, its contents should be removed from the can, stored in the refrigerator and used within a few days.
- Fruits and vegetables packaged in glass jars, plastic tubs and flexible pouches are generally as good as canned products, as they undergo the same kind of processing. Check the label on the packet for the use-by date and information on how they should be stored.

As with fresh fruit and vegetables, when preparing processed vegetables, microwave cooking and steaming are better options than boiling vegetables in a large amount of water, as the food will keep more of its nutritional value.

Dried fruit

The fibre found in dried fruit is good for you and can help to add variety to a healthy, balanced diet. However, it is important to remember that because the water is removed, dried fruit such as sultanas, apples, currants, apricots and prunes will naturally contain a lot of sugar. For this reason, no more than one serving of dried fruit should be eaten a day. An example of one serving of dried fruit is 4 dried apricots or 1½ tablespoons of sultanas.

Dried fruit does have a longer storage life than fresh fruit, however it will not last forever. Check the packet for the use-by date and information on storage.

Fruit and vegetable juices

Fruit juice is often regarded as a healthy choice as it contains Vitamin C. However, one small glass (125 ml) of most fruit juices provides the daily requirement of Vitamin C for children. More than this provides excess sugar and kilojoules that can contribute to weight gain.

WHEN YOU CAN:

- Choose 100% fruit juice rather than fruit drinks or fruit juices with added sugar.
- Select vegetable juices that are low in added salt and sugar.

Remember, a piece of fruit is always a better choice than juice as it provides essential fibre in your diet.

Further information

For more information on healthy eating and physical activity for you and your family, go to:

• www.gofor2and5.com.au • www.livelifewell.nsw.gov.au • www.healthykids.nsw.gov.au • www.cancerinstitute.org.au

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